COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
CONGRESSMAN TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN

N E W S   R E L E A S E

Davis Encouraged by TSA's
Pilot Transit and Rail Inspection Program
But Chairman Seeks Additional Information on Testing and Implementation

Washington, D.C. - House Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) wrote yesterday to Admiral David Stone, Acting Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), to express his support for the pilot Transit and Rail Inspection Program (TRIP) that will be tested at Maryland's New Carrollton rail station next month. While Davis is encouraged by this news, he requests additional information regarding the program, its testing, and implementation.

After the September 11th terrorist attacks, Federal officials recognized the vulnerability of the nation's rail system. These fears have since been confirmed after the horrific train bombings in Madrid last March. The pilot test of TRIP intends to serve as an opportunity for TSA to test new technologies that aid in the screening of passengers and luggage. While few details of the program are known, TSA states that TRIP would be less time-consuming and intrusive than airport screenings.

"The terrorist bombings of Madrid's train system has exposed an enormous hole in our nation's transportation security. The methods and technology used for airport screening are impractical for rail security given the multiple points of entry and the high volume of passengers," said Chairman Davis. "The Committee applauds TSA for this undertaking and is interested in hearing how TRIP will address vulnerabilities at train and transit stations while recognizing their unique security requirements."

A copy of the letter follows:

April 27, 2004
Admiral David M. Stone
Acting Administrator

Transportation Security Administration
TSA Headquarters East Building
Floor 7, TSA-1
601 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 22202-4220

Dear Admiral Stone:

The Committee on Government Reform has been conducting oversight of mass transit security since the fall of 2003. My staff has received multiple briefings from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the Federal Transit Administration, and other transportation associations. In February, my staff was given a security briefing by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and toured WMATA's Operational Control Center and the Carmen Turner Training Center.

Mass transit security is of particular importance to me, as the Virginia Railway Express, Amtrak, and the Metro system run through my District (VA-11th), and thousands of my constituents utilize these rail systems everyday. In addition, I have devoted myself to focusing on issues involving the District of Columbia, which includes WMATA and the passenger trains running through Union Station.

The tragedy in Madrid served as a reminder that oversight of mass transit security is vital to protecting the United States from another act of terrorism. I was, therefore, pleased to read articles over the past week discussing TSA's plans to test its Transit and Rail Inspection Program (TRIP) at Maryland's New Carrollton station next month. It is my understanding that TRIP will screen Amtrak and Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) passengers and luggage for explosives. On April 16, 2004, *The Baltimore Sun's* article, "Security Plan to be Tested at Maryland Train Station," reported TRIP was "expected to start in early May and run 60 to 90 days." The article went on to report that TRIP "would be less invasive and less time-consuming than the searches passengers endure at airports."

While I am encouraged by the TRIP articles, I have additional questions regarding the program, its testing, and implementation. Therefore, in accordance with the Committee's oversight obligations, I request that TSA provide the following information to the Committee by May 11, 2004:

1.   Provide the exact implementation date for the initial testing of TRIP at the New Carrollton station.

2.   Press reports indicate the initial testing for TRIP will run for 60-90 days. Provide a detailed explanation as to whether:

   a.   The 60 to 90 day time frame is accurate and

   b.   If so, how the 60 to 90 days provides enough time to fully gauge whether TRIP is a viable tool for preventing terrorist attacks on passenger rail systems.

3.	With regard to the physical checkpoint at the New Carrollton station, provide the following information:

    a.	How much wait time will be added to each passenger's commute;

    b.	Whether the checkpoint will be mandatory or voluntary for passengers; and

    c.	The time delay that will be added to the train schedules at New Carrollton in general.

4.	Explain specifically the criteria TSA will use order to assess TRIP's effectiveness to prevent terrorist attacks and make rail travel safer.

5.	An April 15, 2004 *Washington Post* article, "Security Tests Set for New Carrollton" reported, TSA stated the goal of TRIP "is to test the effectiveness of new technologies . . .." Identify the following:

    a.	The specific technology TSA will use during the initial testing of TRIP at New Carrollton to screen for explosives and chemical and biological agents and

    b.	If TSA plans to test addition technology after the initial 60 to 90 day testing of TRIP, the technologies that will be utilized.

6.	*The Washington Post* article also reported "Rail passengers would not have to remove their shoes or undergo pat-down searches . . . But their luggage could be checked for explosives by bomb-sniffing dogs or new technologies . . ." Provide a description of the specific protocol TSA will implement to determine which luggage will be used for explosive testing.

7.	An April 19, 2004 *Government Executive Magazine* article, "TSA Plans Rail Security Pilot Program," reported TSA has not yet determined how to staff the TRIP checkpoint. Explain specifically how TSA will go about staffing the TRIP checkpoint at the New Carrollton station.

8.	Press articles state Metro riders at the New Carrollton station will not be affected by TRIP testing. Provide information as to whether TSA has plans to implement a program similar to TRIP for Metro riders in the future.

9.	If TRIP testing is successful at the New Carrollton station, provide specific information as to:

    a.	TSA's plans to implement TRIP at other locations

in both the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area and throughout the United States;

    b.   The time frame for implementation at other rail stations; and

    c.   Whether the participation in TRIP would be mandatory or voluntary for the additional stations.

Finally, I request that TSA provide to Committee staff a briefing covering TRIP, its testing, and implementation.

Sincerely,

Tom Davis
Chairman

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